RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 11th August, 1987/20 Sravana, 1909 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, **The Deputy Chairman** in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Alleged intrusion by BSF personnel into Bangladesh Territory

*201. PROF. C LAKSHMANNA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is Government's reaction to the allegation made by the Bangladesh Government about the intrusion by Border Security Force personnel into Bangladesh territory on two occasions in the month of June, 1987; and

(b) what are the details of the dialogue with the Bangladesh Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): (a) Government had rejected the Bangladesh Government's allegations that the Border Security Force had intruded into Bangladesh territory twice in June, 1987.

(b) It has been conveyed to the Bangladesh Government that making such unsubstantiated allegations vitiates the atmosphere of friendly relations between the two countries.

PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Madam Deputy Chairman, the Government is stated that they have rejected the allegations of Bangladesh but Bangladesh goes on making such allegations. One possible way in which it could have been avoided was to fulfil what has been promised by the Government to this House and the other House that there shall be fencing along the border between India and Bangladesh and that there shall be watch towers. In fact, about two years back, the then Minister assured the House that as soon as the rainy season is over, the work will be taken up. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what progress has been made in this connection which perhaps would have avoided the possibility of such allegations. When will the Government hope to complete both the fencing as well as the watch towers?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Madam Deputy Chairman, the question of fencing is an entirely different matter. This question of the hon. Member relates to a particular incident about which we have conveyed our views to the Bangladesh Government. Now, with regard to the fencing, if he tables another question, we will be very happy to answer it.

PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Madam Deputy Chairman, I don't agree with the hon. Minister's contention that these two are unconnected. They were very much connected but it is the Ministers's privilege to think so. However, I would like to know whether there has been any firing on an Indian national by the Bangladesh border forces roughly about the same time.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Madam, in the details that I have, we have no particular mention of this matter but if the hon'ble Member wishes, we will find out and I will convey the information to him.

SHRI NARAYAN KAR: I would like to know from the hon'ble Minister whether this allegation of the Bangladesh Government is a plea on the part of the Bangladesh Government to delay the repatriation of Chakma refugees from Tripura to Bangladesh and if he thinks so, what steps have been taken by the Government of India to settle the Chakma problem at the highest political level?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Madam, we are in touch with the Bangladesh authorities with regard to the Chakma problem but here again, if I may respectfully submit, we should confine ourselves to the matter raised in this question.

Child Labour

*202. PROF. B. RAMACHANDRA RAO:†
SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) what is the estimated number of child labour in the country at present;

(b) how many of them are working in factories, mines and other hazardous occupations;

(c) whether the Child Labour Bill passed by Parliament has been implemented to prevent the pernicious social evil of exploitation of children;

(d) whether the ban on employment of children below 14 years in specified occupations has been implemented; and

(e) if so, whether the Union Government have set up any rehabilitation centres for the exploited children?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A. SANGMA): (a) to (e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

According to the Planning Commission's estimates the total number of child workers in the country as on March, 1985 was 17.58 million.

No accurate figures of children working in factories, mines and other hazardous occupations are available. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 is in force with effect from 23rd December, 1986. The State Governments have been addressed to enforce the Child Labour Act strictly.

The Schedule to the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 specifically includes the processes and occupations in which child labour is banned. Along with the coming into force of the Act, the ban on employment of children in specific occupations has also come into effect.

The Union Government have not so far directly set up any centres for the rehabilitation of child labour. However, it has given financial assistance to various voluntary organisations to undertake projects to benefit and rehabilitate child labour. Government propose to announce a National Child Labour Policy, which will, among other things, incorporate an element of such rehabilitation.

PROF. B. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Madam Deputy Chairman, the answer given to this question puts the responsibility entirely on the State Government to implement the Act which we have passed in November last year and which came into force on 23rd December. I would like to know whether the Government has taken any concrete steps during the last few months to see whether this practice particularly of employing children below 14 year in hazardous jobs has been done away with. Even after passing the Act, million of people in match factories in Sivakasi, glass factories in Ferozabad and power mills in Biwandi, they are continuing unabated and the Bill had made no impact. I would like to know from the Minister whether any monitoring mechanism has been set up to see whether the Bill is implemented, as it is against Article 24 of the Constitution of India.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Prof. B. Ramachandra Rao.